Spotted Lanternfly Frequently Asked Questions

Get the answers to the most frequently asked questions about spotted lanternfly, including their damage to plants, how to manage them on your property, and what you can do to help!

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Spotted Lanternfly adult

Q. What is the spotted lanternfly?

A. Native to Asia, the spotted lanternfly first was discovered in Berks County in 2014. As of 2026 it has spread to 57 Pennsylvania counties and to many surrounding states, though it is important to remember that just because a county is in the quarantine, that does not mean that every municipality in that county has a spotted lanternfly population and care should still be taken to avoid spreading it to new areas.

The insect has a broad host range, including ornamental and woody plants, and is a threat to the state's agriculture, primarily viticulture. Its propensity for hitchhiking has warranted state quarantines that require any shipment and movement of goods, as well as conveyances, to be free of any life stage of the spotted lanternfly. As such, its economic impacts may be felt by a wide range of industries, such as forest products, tourism, and any business that ships any goods into or out of quarantined areas. It is a nuisance pest to the public, and authorities stress the need to keep this pest from spreading.

Q. I think I killed/caught a spotted lanternfly in an area where it is not presently known to exist. What do I do?

A. If you find a spotted lanternfly or suspicious-looking egg mass in a location where it is not known to exist, you should try to collect it and put it into a container with alcohol (rubbing alcohol, hand sanitizer, etc.) to kill and preserve it, or at least take a good picture of it.

Report your sighting to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture usingHave you seen a Spotted Lanternfly? (https://extension.psu.edu/have-you-seen-a-spotted-lanternfly) on the Penn State Extension website, or by calling Penn State Extension at 888-4BADFLY (888-422-3359). Your discovery is important and could help efforts to reduce the insect's further spread.

Q. I have spotted lanternfly in an area near my home, work, school, etc., in a municipality where it is already known to exist, but I am concerned. Any advice on what I should do?

A. If possible, you should try to destroy it/them. If you have questions about how to do this, you can:

- Call Penn State Extension at 888-4BADFLY (888-422-3359). Call Center representatives can answer general questions about the spotted lanternfly and direct you to Extension information resources. However, they do not handle requests for pest control or treatment services.
- Use Penn State Extension's Spotted Lanternfly Management Guide(https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-guide) for direction on how to manage the pest effectively. Authored by scientists and extension educators in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, the guide features comprehensive information, illustrations, charts and photos on the pest's biology, behavior, plant damage and management, and an overview of ongoing research.
- Consult some of the additional spotted lanternfly resources that can be found online on Penn State Extension's Spotted Lanternfly information page(https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly).

Q. Can I prevent spotted lanternflies from getting on my property?

A. No. Spotted lanternflies cannot be prevented from coming onto your property, particularly as adults, when they become more mobile. However, their presence alone does not indicate that you will have plant decline on your property. In some cases, the insects may just be attracted to their favorite plants or to buildings. They land on buildings for warmth, height or other unknown reasons. They do not cause structural damage to buildings, and adult spotted lanternflies will move on in a few weeks or die with cold weather.

The best thing any property owner can do is become informed about spotted lanternflies. In addition, you can reference Penn State Extension's Spotted Lanternfly Management Guide (https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-guide)for what management tactics to use, and when.

Q. Should I treat my tree?

A. There is no catch-all answer to this question, though it is frequently asked. It depends on many factors including the type of tree, how healthy it is and the level of infestation. Extension has developed guides to help you through this decision. See Deciding If and When to Treat for Spotted Lanternfly on Ornamentals (https://extension.psu.edu/deciding-if-and-when-to-treat-for-spotted-lanternfly-on-ornamentals) for more information.

Q. Does the spotted lanternfly bite or sting?

A. No, the spotted lanternfly does not bite or sting.

Q. Do spotted lanternflies kill trees and plants?

A. To date, scientists have seen spotted lanternfly kill only grapevines, tree of heaven and black walnut saplings. Healthy and established ornamental trees have not been recorded to have died from spotted lanternfly, though branch dieback and plant health decline has been observed, particularly on some of the spotted lanternfly's favorite hosts, including black walnut and maple. Additionally, sooty mold — which can grow on large quantities of the pest's sugary excrement — has been known to kill groundcover plants, particularly immediately below large populations of spotted lanternflies in trees. This is a continued area of research.

Q. Will we ever be rid of the spotted lanternfly?

The spotted lanternfly likely is here to stay, but new research suggests that a wide range of insecticides and nonchemical control methods can help protect vulnerable plants. These methods can help keep the pest at bay while scientists work toward more sustainable, long-term management options. Another promising development is that spotted lanternfly feeding is not destroying fruit trees or most tree species as once thought possible.

For the latest information on spotted lanternfly, including a monthly newsletter, visit Penn State Extension's Spotted Lanternfly information page(https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly) or contact the spotted lanternfly hotline, 888-4BAD-FLY.

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